

SEN. RAND PAUL
IMMIGRATION REFORM SPEECH
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Por favor disculpen mi Espanol. Como creci en Houston -es un poco 'espanglish y un poco Tex Mex.

I lived, worked, played and grew up alongside Latinos. As a teenager I worked alongside immigrants mowing lawns and putting in landscaping around businesses.

I remember once asking one of the immigrant workers how much he was being paid. "Cuanto le Pagan por el trabajo? "

He responded "tres dolars." I responded,
"Yo tambien. Tres Dolars, por hora . . . ?"

He shook shook his head, "No tres Dolars, por dia!"

At a young age, I came to understand that it makes a difference whether you are a documented immigrant or an undocumented immigrant, that the existence was not easy for the undocumented but that opportunity in America somehow trumped even the poor living conditions and low pay.

I wondered what circumstances must have been like in his country to choose an admittedly tough life in the shadows.

Growing up in Texas I never met a Latino who wasn't working.

In school, everyone took Spanish. I sometimes wish I had paid more attention in class. As a teenager, I was not always the model citizen that I am today...

In my middle school Spanish class, my exuberance sometimes overcame my restraint and I would be asked to go to the principal's office. My Spanish teacher would scold me,

"En boca cerrada no entran moscas!"

Cuando no lo escuchaba, I would often be sent to the Principal's office.

In those days we had corporal punishment. After a few such trips to the principal's office, I discovered that my Spanish teacher was married to the Assistant Principal and they were getting a divorce.

So when I was sent to the principal's office, I would make the decision to go instead to the Assistant Principal's office. He and I would commiserate: Oh man she's crazy! You're right kid, just sit here today and go back tomorrow.

As a consequence, I never became as proficient with my Spanish as I would have liked because I spent a great deal of time in detention.

I read Miguel de Unamuno in college. I think he gives Republicans some good advice,

He wrote,

“MIREmos más que somos padres de nuestro porvenir que no hijos de nuestro pasado”

Republicans need to become parents of a new future with Latino voters or we will need to resign ourselves to permanent minority status.

The Republican Party has insisted for years that we stand for freedom and family values. I am most proud of my party when it stands for both.

The vast majority of Latino voters agree with us on these issues but Republicans have pushed them away with harsh rhetoric over immigration.

Immigration is a contentious issue in American politics. In our zeal for border control, we have sometimes obscured our respect and admiration for immigrants and their contribution to America.

Republicans have been losing both the respect and votes of a group of people who already identify with our belief in family, faith, and conservative values. Hispanics should be a natural and sizable part of the Republican base.

That they have steadily drifted away from the GOP in each election says more about Republicans than it does about Hispanics.

Whether we are discussing hard work, respect for life or the quest for freedom, immigrants bring with them the same values that previous generations of immigrants did.

Defense of the unborn and defense of traditional marriage are Republican issues that should resonate with Latinos but have been obscured by the misperception that Republicans are hostile to immigrants.

Somewhere along the line Republicans have failed to understand and articulate that immigrants are an asset to America, not a liability.

My German great-grandparents didn't speak much English when they came to America. They didn't have much, but they also didn't ask for much-all they wanted was an opportunity.

They began in America peddling vegetables. They finally got that opportunity when they started a dairy business in their garage, scraping together a living, raising a family, and constantly working to give their children a better life than they had.

My great-grandfather came to America in the 1880's. His father died after only six months in America. At 14, my great-grandfather was alone.

He survived and ultimately thrived in his new country with a new language. In their home and their church they spoke German.

Republicans who criticize the use of two languages make a great mistake.

As the son of immigrants, my grandfather, who only had an 8th grade education, would live to see his own children all go to college. They became ministers, professors, doctors and accountants and one of them became a Congressman.

My family's story is like that of millions of others who came to this country. Every generation of immigrants wants these opportunities.

Many have faced intolerance and bigotry. It was not always easy to be German American in the face of two world wars started by Germans. Intolerance is not new, and it is not limited to one language or skin color.

But through our rich history, and for many millions of immigrants who came to America, such sacrifice and hardship was worth it. They wanted what all Americans want-better lives for themselves, their children and grandchildren.

For the American Dream to be achievable for all, we have to have an educational system that believes that all students have the capability to succeed.

Unfortunately, the education establishment seems to casually discard Latinos, blacks, and others into crummy schools with no hope.

I argue that the struggle for a good education is the civil rights issue of our day.

I love the story of Jaime Escalante.

In the area of East Los Angeles, in 1982, in an environment that values a quick fix over education and learning, Escalante was a new math teacher at Garfield High School determined to change the system and challenge the students to a higher level of achievement.

Escalante was at first not well liked by students, receiving numerous taunts and threats.

As the year progressed, he was able to win over the attention of the students by implementing innovative teaching techniques.

He transformed even the most troublesome teens into dedicated students. While Escalante was teaching basic arithmetic and algebra, he realized that his students have far more potential.

He decides to teach them calculus. To do so, he held a summer course in pre-calculus.

Despite concerns and skepticism of other teachers, who felt that "you can't teach logarithms to illiterates," Escalante nonetheless developed a program in which his students can eventually take AP Calculus by their senior year.

Taking the AP Calculus exam in the spring of their senior year, his students are relieved and overjoyed to find that they have all passed, a feat done by few in the state.

My dream is that we transform the education monopoly into a thriving, competitive environment where Hispanic students get to choose what school they attend and that no student is forgotten or ignored.

America's strength has always been that we are a melting pot with room for those who dare to dream. I've seen firsthand what it is like for new immigrants in Texas.

I've never met a new immigrant looking for a free lunch.

The question is: How do we now reflect this in our 21st century immigration policy?

It is absolutely vital for both the success of our immigration policy and for the purposes of national security that we finally secure our borders.

Not to stop most immigrants from coming-we welcome them and in fact should seek to increase legal immigration.

The Republican Party must embrace more legal immigration.

Unfortunately, like many of the major debates in Washington, immigration has become a stalemate-where both sides are imprisoned by their own rhetoric or attachment to sacred cows that prevent the possibility of a balanced solution.

Immigration Reform will not occur until Conservative Republicans, like myself, become part of the solution. I am here today to begin that conversation.

Let's start that conversation by acknowledging we aren't going to deport 12 million illegal immigrants.

If you wish to work, if you wish to live and work in America, then we will find a place for you.

In order to bring conservatives to this cause however, those who work for reform must understand that a real solution must ensure that our borders are secure.

But we also must treat those who are already here with understanding and compassion.

The first part of my plan - border security - must be certified by Border Patrol and an Investigator General and then voted on by Congress to ensure it has been accomplished.

This is what I call, Trust but Verify.

With this in place, I believe conservatives will accept what needs to come next, an issue that must be addressed: what becomes of the 12 million undocumented workers in the United States?

My plan is very simple and will include work visas for those who are here, who are willing to come forward and work.

A bipartisan panel would determine number of visas per year. High tech visas would also be expanded and have a priority. Special entrepreneurial visas would also be issued.

Fairness is key in any meaningful immigration reform, but this fairness would cut both ways:

The modernization of our visa system and border security would allow us to accurately track immigration.

It would also enable us to let more people in and allow us to admit we are not going to deport the millions of people who are currently here illegally.

This is where prudence, compassion and thrift all point us toward the same goal: bringing these workers out of the shadows and into being taxpaying members of society.

Imagine 12 million people who are already here coming out of the shadows to become new taxpayers. 12 million more people assimilating into society. 12 million more people being productive contributors.

Conservatives, myself included, are wary of amnesty. My plan will not grant amnesty or move anyone to the front of the line.

But what we have now is de facto amnesty.

The solution doesn't have to be amnesty or deportation-a middle ground might be called probation where those who came illegally become legal through a probationary period.

My plan will not impose a national ID card or mandatory E-Verify, forcing businesses to become policemen.

We should not be unfair to those who came to our country legally. Nor should we force business owners to become immigration inspectors-making them do the job the federal government has failed to do.

After an Inspector General has verified that the border is secure after year one, the report must come back and be approved by Congress.

In year two, we could begin expanding probationary work visas to immigrants who are willing to work. I would have Congress vote each year for five years whether to approve or not approve a report on whether or not we are securing the border.

We should be proud that so many want to come to America, that it is still seen as the land of opportunity.

Let's make it a land of legal work, not black market jobs. Let's make it a land of work not welfare. Our land should be one of assimilation, not hiding in the shadows.

On immigration, common sense and decency have been neglected for far too long. Let's secure our borders, welcome our new neighbors, and practice the values of freedom and family for all to see.

Some say to generalize about any ethnic group is be a racist. There is a hilarious Seinfeld episode where Jerry admits that he loves Asian women but he frets and worries, "Is it racist to like a certain race?"

So it is with trepidation that I express my admiration for the romance of the latin culture. I am a fan of Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

In Love in the Time of Cholera, Marquez gives some advice that Republicans might consider,

" . . . human beings are not born once and for all on the day their mothers give birth to them, . . . life obliges them over and over again to give birth to themselves."

Likewise, Republicans need to give birth to a new attitude toward immigrants, an attitude that sees immigrants as assets not liabilities.

No one captures the romance of the Latin culture more than Pablo Neruda.

I love how Neruda in "Si tu me Olvidas" issues a passionate threat but ends by saying,

"Pero
si cada día,
cada hora,
sientes que a mí estás destinada
con dulzura implacable,
si cada día sube
una flor a tus labios a buscarme,
ay amor mío, ay mía,
en mí todo ese fuego se repite,
en mí nada se apaga ni se olvida"

How can we not embrace such passion. How can we not want that culture to merge with and infuse the American spirit. They are not called the romance languages for no reason.

As we move forward on immigration reform, I for one will work to find a solution that both adheres to the rule of law and makes room for compassion.

My hope is that today we begin a dialogue between the GOP and Latinos.

A dialogue that shows that the GOP sees all immigrants as assets and that Latinos can come to see the GOP as the party of opportunity, the party of the American Dream, -- El partido del sueño Americano